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HISTORICAL SKETCH

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Souvenir of the Ontario and Quebec Press Excursion
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SAINT-SULPICE

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I

Old Times

The History of the Saguenay begins with the rise of the French Colony in America. The writings of the first European explorers of the St-Lawrence mention the country, Cartier, Champlain, Lescarbot, Michaux and many others speak of its mineral resources and of the customs of the savage tribes who inhabited the territory.

The great nation of the Montagnais which lived there was divided into nine tribes. Two only exist at

present. The Montagnais, now settled in the county of Saguenay at Betsiamis and on the borders of Lake St-John and the Naskapis who occupy the height of land as far as Hudson Bay.

The Tadousacians, the Chicoutimians, the Aschamouchoumians are now no more and have disapeared before the invading torrent of colonization.

There now remain little more than one hundred families in the midst of the farming population, most of them still live by hunting and fishing, but they are no more the savage people of olden times. A few of them have succeeded in making a living by cultivating the soil.

II

The first missionaries who preached the word of God in the Saguenay were Jesuits. At the very beginning of the Colony they visited Tadousac, and in 1693 Father de Crepieul paid

a visit to the mission of St-Francis Xaverius of Chicoutimi. Long before him, in 1661, Rev. Fathers Druillettes and Dablon ascended the River Saguenay, crossed Lake St-John and penetrated the forest as far as the height of land. Ten years later, Revd Father Albanel made very nearly the same trip, and went as far as Hudson Bay. A township situated 78 miles from Chicoutimi and a promising settlement bears his name.

Rev. Father Albanel built chapels or mission churches at Chicoutimi and Lake St-John. The site of the chapel built at Chicoutimi is now enclosed within the limits of Messrs Price's sawmills. A fence is the only mark that can tell of its existence to the traveller.

The last Jesuits who preached the Gospel in the Saguenay district were the Revd Fathers Cocquart and Labrosse.

III

The territory of Saguenay under the french domination was leased as a hunting and fishing ground.

Under the english domination the same system was adopted, but the lease was renewed every 21 years. The lessees finding it to be in their interest to conceal the great ressources of the country from the eye of the explorers, the territory remained complete ly unknown up to 1820.

But in the year 1828 the truth was made known, and the Legislature ordered the whole county to be explored.

Topography of the Saguenay

The River Saguenay flows out of Lake St-John by two channels, called *La petite et la grande Décharge* and forms the Island of Alma. For thirty miles the course of the river is brokenby falls,cascades and rapids which

render its navigation by any other craft than a bark canoe impossible. Seven miles from Chicoutimi the river becomes navigable and continues so to its mouth.

It varies in width from one to three miles and in depth from ten to eighteen hundred feet. Its shores are formed for the most part of cliffs and mountain bluffs from 1000 to 2000 feet in height, and good harbours are very rare. It receives the waters of numerous tributaries, the most important being the Chicoutimi River. On its bank are the extensive saw mills of Messrs Price Bros & Co.

From Tadousac to Grand Bay or Ha! Ha! Bay, the extent of farming land is somewhat limited; and only few groups of settlers are to be found scattered on the shores of the Saguenay. Two only can be called parishes Tadousac and Anse St-Jean.

It is above Ha! Ha! Bay that the farming county is to be found. Two

beautiful parishes are situated on the shores of the Bay. On the South St-Alphonse where the St-Lawrence and Saguenay Navigation Co has erected its wharves, and two or three miles further on the left, St-Alexis likewise a charming little parish.

On the north of the River Saguenay, the tourist can perceive the parish of St-Fulgence which possesses the saw mills of Messrs Fraser and Co, and the parish of St-Ann, the last parish on the north shore which has any canonical or civil organization.

On the south, having St-Alphonse as its eastern boundary, is the parish and town of Chicoutimi ; to the south east Notre-Dame de Laterrière, and to the west St-Dominique de Jonquières, the two latter are large parishes and rival in every respect, the best to be found around Quebec.

From St-Dominique to Hébertville, a distance of 18 miles, a few settlers are met with ; they have established themselves on the banks of

Lake Kenogami, a fine lake, 21 miles in length.

Hebertville is the most thickly populated parish of the Lake St-John Valley. The first settlers arrived here in 1851.

The parishes surrounding Hebertville are : St-Joseph d'Alma et St-Gedeon de Grandmont ; the latter is situated on the lake. There then come St-Jerome (the terminus of the colonisation road from Quebec to Lake St-John) St-Louis which is separated from St-Jerome by the Metabetchouan river. This will probably be the terminus of the Lake St-John Railway.

Notre-Dame du Lac St-Jean which was settled immediately after Hebertville. The Ursuline nuns of Quebec founded a convent there last year.

The last parish of the Lake District is St-Prime ; it is not more than 18 years old. From Notre Dame du Lac St-Jean, the country which up to this is hilly and mountaineous undergoes a complete change ; the

mountains and hills have disappeared and a vast prairie stretches out offering the most fertile land to the settler. Here and there new parishes have already sprung up, some of them already requiring the services of a curate for themselves, such as St-Felicien, Normandin, and Albanel.

Behind the parishes bordering on the Lake, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of acres of the finest land in the province are to be found. And before many years this portion of our province is destined to be great centre of attraction to settlers.

Chicoutimi and its surroundings

Population—Agricultural progress of the county—Industrial, Educational and other buildings and institutions.

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The parish of St-François-Xavier of Chicoutimi, which is situated on the shores of the Saguenay river, dates back to 1845, at least as a farming

settlement. Though one of the oldest parishes of the country, yet it still counts amongst its inhabitants many of its first settlers. In spite of its geographical situation, of the absence of all necessary communication, its progress has been really astonishing. It has no railway and steamboats touch there only since 1870. The only sure means of communication was by schooners.

During the first years of the settlement, the men employed by Messrs Price at Chicoutimi, at Grand Bay consumed all the grain produced; but in a few years the crops exceeded the local consumption. With no convenient means of shipping his produce, the farmer became the prey of the parish shop keeper, who sold his goods at exorbitant prices, giving little or nothing for the grain in return. These men, by their avarice, were a serious obstacle in the way of the general developement of the county, until competition rightly set in.

But more terrible than any obstacle was the havoc made by the fire fiend. Twice in twenty five years the whole settlement was on the eve of becoming a prey to this devouring element. The fifth of may 1846 and the 19 of May 1870 are dates never to be forgotten in the annals of the Saguenay district. On this occasion St-Alexis and St-Alphonse were almost entirely destroyed. The second conflagration was still more disastrous. The whole district from Ha ! Ha ! Bay to Lake St-John was one mass of flames and the scenes that must have occurred in this terrible disaster, are beyond all conception.

It is in those times of distress that the powerful voice of the press is felt. True to its mission, it made itself heard. The tales of the sufferings and privations caused by this sad and lamentable drama, were echoed through the country. The province of Quebec and the province of Ontario readily come forward to answer our appeal for help, and they

succeeded in partially repairing the terrible havoc made by the fire.

In consequence the citizens of Chicoutimi are glad to avail themselves of this opportunity to receive their benefactors, at least the successors of those who lent them such substantial aid in their misfortune and whose Mission is ever to enlighten the people, and excite their pity in favor of the unfortunate.

The parishes of St-Alexis and St-Alphonse were founded in 1837. Ten years later Notre-Dame de Laterrière followed. The first settlement there being made under the direction of the Oblats fathers. The property formerly occupied by the fathers is now in the possession of Mr Jules Gauthier and his two sons. Their farm in one of the best in the Saguenay district, and in all respects a model farm.

The first attempts at colonisation in St-Dominique, were made in 1848. The first settlers came from Malbaie. It is now one of the most

flourishing parishes of the County. It has a cheese factory, built this year, by a very enterprising merchant of the locality, M. Joseph Brassard.

This gentleman and two of his brothers, Messrs David and Onezime Brassard, control the whole of the trade of the parish. To their liberal way of transacting business the developpement of the trade of the place is greatly due.

St. Ann and Ste. Fulgence were settled about the same date as Chicoutimi.

Extracts from the census of 1851-71-81

	Population			Bushels of wheat produced.	
	1851	1871	1881	1871	1881
Chicoutimi– par.	.....	.....	2687	.....	18,330
do ville	1200	4100	.....	29,768	.....
St-Alphonse.....	.....	1598	1935	.....	1,981
St-Alexis.....	1438	.....	1579	12,642	9,921
Ste-Anne	.....	1304	1749	8,848	8,242
St-Fulgence....	507	158	1260	9,104	5,804
St-Dominique.....	.....	.....	845	2,600	3,303
Grand-Brûlé	82	1290	1511	12,726	10,530
Hébertville.....	367	1319	1320	13,164	9,001
St Gédéon	.....	.....	2501	.....	19,255
Alma...	.....	2129	654	24,141	5,025
St-Jérôme...	.....	.....	700	.....	2,467
St-Louis	.....	1048	1803	3,773	17,374
Roberval.....	.....	.....	1067	.....	8,442
	.....	2467	1186	23,674	14,185
St-Prime.....	.....	....	956	... .	6,889
St-Félicien.....	.....	.....	530	.....	2,703

The quantity of other cereals grown in the County of Chicoutimi in 1871 amount to 445,405 bushels

and in 1881, to 964,992 bushels showing an increase of 119,587 bushels.

Town of Chicoutimi.

Chicoutimi, which is situated at the junction of the Chicoutimi and Saguenay rivers was founded in 1850 It obtained its charter as a town in 1879, and since 1878, it is the seat of a bishopric, of which His Lordship Mgr Racine is the first title bearer. When curate of Chicoutimi His Lordship built the cathedral which is really a magnificent edifice.

In 1863 His Lordship founded the Good Shepherd Convent and in 1872 a College, which is now affiliated to the Laval University and is considered as one of the prominent institutions of Canada.

Chicoutimi is also the judicial centre of the District of Chicoutimi. From 1848 and 1857 there was only a Circuit Court presided over by Judge Roy, who was elevated to the Supe-

rior Court in 1857 and replaced in 1870 by His Honor Mr Justice Elzear Taschereau now one of the judges of the Supreme Court of Canada. Since 1873 His Honor Mr Justice A. B. Routhier administers justice in this District.

At Chicoutimi the Messrs Price Bros. have their largest Saw-Mills; perhafits he most extensive of the kind in the Province.

The Mills turn out on an average enough to freight from thirty five to forty ships a year at Chicoutimi.

During the spring of 1882 an enterprising citizen of Quebec went to Chicoutimi with the intention of starting a cheese factory. He has succeeded beyond all hopes and has now started a second factory in St Alphonse.

Chicoutimi now possess a Marine Hospital which on account of the number of sea going vessels visiting the port every year was greatly desired.

The hospital was built by the Federal Government who realizing

the great importance of a country which is almost a Province in itself has also granted Chicoutimi telegraphic communication with the entire world.

The improvements now making on the channel at Chicoutimi will permit steamers and ships to anchor at low tide.

Opposite the Marine Hospital stands Price's Monument, erected by Citizens of Chicoutimi and of the surrounding parishes to the memory of him who has so worthly named " Le père du Saguenay."

The County of Chicoutimi was created a separate County in 1883, from that time until 1864 the County was represented in the Legislative Assembly of Canada by the Hon. Senator Price, except during one year (1854-55) when it was represented by the Hon. A. N. Morin.

En 1864 Mr. Price who had just been elected member of the Legislative Council was replaced in the Legislative Assembly by the late Mr

P. A. Tremblay who was the member for the county until confederation.

From 1867 the county was represented by the following members.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

1867 to 1872—P. A. Tremblay (died 1874).

1872 to 1874—W. E. Price (died 1880).

1874 to 1882—Ernest Cimon (now a judge).

1882—J. A. Gagné.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF QUEBEC.

1867 to 1874—P. A. Tremblay (who resigned his seat when the system of dual representation was abolished).

1874 to 1875—William Baby.

1875 to 1880—W. E. Price.

1880 to 1881—Elisée Beaudet.

1881—Elie Saint-Hilaire.

The above historical sketch is sufficient to prove that a great future is

in store for the vast District of the Saguenay, which almost unknown forty years ago has already attained such prosperity.

If in spite of all drawbacks, having no communication with the outer world during the winter months except by land, no railway or steam communication whatsoever, for the greater portion of its existence, it has progressed so rapidly, what can we not hope for it when a great railway shall put into communication with all the great centres of the Country. This dream of the inhabitants of Chicoutimi and Lake St John is about to be realized. One third of the road is already made ; the contract for the remainder given out, and in 1885 should the second grand excursion of the Associated Press of Canada arrive at Chicoutimi. The tour of Lake St-John shall be on the programme and the return trip shall commence at St-Jerome by the oft repeated words : *All aboard for the West.*

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